Claims:

2. (Twice Amended.) An apparatus comprising:

a catheter configured for receiving fluids from a respiratory tract of a patient;

a manifold defining a ventilation circuit disposed in communication with the catheter so as to allow the catheter to be advanced through the ventilation circuit of the manifold and into the respiratory tract of the patient; and

a valve disposed in the manifold, the valve being configured to selectively limit the withdrawal of air from the ventilation circuit, wherein the valve is capable of being opened by the catheter; wherein the valve comprises at least one protrusion on at least one surface of the valve, and wherein the valve is a flap.

11. (Twice Amended.) An endotracheal catheter system comprising:

a catheter having a distal end configured for suctioning secretions from the respiratory system of a patient;

a ventilator manifold disposed in communication with the catheter such that the catheter may be advanced through the manifold into the respiratory system of the patient and withdrawn from the respiratory system of the patient through the manifold; and

a valve for at least partially occluding the distal end of the catheter, the valve being configured to frictionally engage the distal end and thereby occlude the distal end, wherein the valve is capable of being opened by the catheter, wherein the valve comprises a flap and wherein the valve further comprises at least one protrusion on at least one surface of the valve.

15. (Thrice Amended.) A respiratory suction apparatus comprising:

a suction catheter having a distal end for suctioning secretions;

a protective sleeve surrounding a proximal longitudinal portion of the catheter;

a manifold connected to the protective sleeve for attachment to a hub of an artificial airway in fluid communication between the respiratory tract of a patient and a ventilator, said manifold having means for accommodating inspiration and expiration of respiratory gases; and

a valve connected to the manifold and pivotally moveable with respect thereto for engaging the distal end of the catheter to minimize the amount of air being drawn thereinto responsive to suction through the catheter, wherein the valve is capable of being opened by the catheter, wherein the valve comprises a flap and wherein the valve further comprises at least one protrusion on a surface of the valve.